

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 485

SO 016 211

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TITLE Student Evaluation of an Urban Internship Program.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (San Antonio, TX, August 27-31, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cross Cultural Training; Educational Change; Higher Education; Instructional Improvement; *Internship Programs; Program Evaluation; *Sociology; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Student Educational Objectives; Student Projects; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS Westmont College CA

ABSTRACT

Seventy-four participants were asked to evaluate a liberal arts internship program, using a 73-item questionnaire. The program consists of three components: a three day per week internship, an urban studies seminar, and an optional independent study component. The program was evaluated in terms of five program goals. The evaluation indicated that the program was successful in teaching students about working with different people (especially cross-cultural experiences), learning about the urban environment and urban problems, and participating in a living-learning community. The program was less successful in helping students apply sociological concepts and theories to the urban situation. Suggestions for improving the program include providing more structure for students in the problem discovering and solving process by having the students actively involved in the collection of quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the off-campus program with on-campus programs. (Author/IS)

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Student Evaluation of an Urban Internship Program

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Paper presented
American Sociological Association Meetings
San Antonio, Texas 1984

ED253485

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ABSTRACT

Many sociology programs are currently incorporating applied components into the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. There are two basic types of applied internship programs, vocationally oriented programs and liberal arts programs. This paper describes and analyzes a liberal arts internship program. Seventy-four students in the program were asked to evaluate it in terms of a 73 item questionnaire. The program consists of three components: a three day per week internship, urban studies seminar, and an optional independent study. The program was evaluated in terms of 5 program goals. The evaluation indicated that the program was successful in teaching students about working with different people (especially cross-cultural experiences), the urban environment and urban problems, and participating in a living-learning community. The program was less successful in helping students apply sociological concepts and theories in the urban situation. Various suggestions are presented to increase the effectiveness of applied internship programs.

Institutions of higher learning are being called upon by students, public and private officials, and the population at large, to re-examine their roles and develop programs and curricula that are relevant to a wide spectrum of the population.¹ Colleges and universities are experiencing trends in student enrollment away from the traditional liberal arts to professional majors such as business, economics, accounting, computer science, and management programs partially in the perception that these programs will provide students with more marketable skills. Higher education is being asked to become less standardized and more specialized in its course and program offerings for a more diverse population.

Sociology as a discipline has certainly not been immune from these pressures. The most visible sign of the current "crisis" is certainly the decline in student enrollment in sociology courses and majors in sociology. The declines in enrollment are due to a number of factors including economic and technological changes, relative prestige and employability of sociology majors, development of new professions and employment trends, and changes in the student population. Sociology is being forced to re-examine itself. As Watt and Associates (1983:47) note: "To avoid the threat of extinction, sociology must examine and change the method and perhaps the content of what it professes." They also note that we need to give students an academically sound education that is useful for employment (p. 59).

In response to these pressures, many sociology programs are incorporating applied components into the undergraduate and graduate curricu-

lum. While the specific curriculum of such programs vary, they usually incorporate some type of internship component and emphasis on applied research. Goals for such programs also vary, but they may include increasing the relevancy of the sociology curriculum, making the curriculum more vocationally oriented, and increasing the marketability of sociology majors (Bradshaw and McPherron, 1978; Daudistel, 1983).²

It is possible to identify two basic types of applied, internship programs. One type of program is generally more vocationally oriented with an emphasis on teaching students job related skills to increase their employability. The more traditional type of liberal arts internship program (while acknowledging that applied programs can increase students' marketability) emphasizes the educational goals (cross-cultural experience, personal growth, interdisciplinary learning, etc.) of such programs. Most of the recent attention has focused on the vocationally oriented programs. The purpose of this paper is to describe a program that more nearly fits the liberal arts type of applied program, Westmont College's Urban Internship Program. The program has been in operation for over ten years.

Westmont College Urban Program

Westmont College is a private, non-denominational, liberal arts institution located in Santa Barbara, California with approximately 70 full-time faculty and 1,000 undergraduate students. In its initial form, the Urban program began as a two-week interterm course with the first four days spent on the Santa Barbara campus and the remaining 10 days in San Francisco (for four units of credit). Later, the program was developed into a full-semester (two separate semesters per year) program. There are usually at least two full-time faculty members (at

least one of which usually lives with the students) with numerous auxiliary on-site personnel. Enrollments average 30 students in the fall and 20 students in the spring.³ Initially the program leased space from a college in San Francisco; later, they leased a boarding facility in the city.

The program consists of the following components:

- 1) Internship. All students spend three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) for eight hours a day, working with an agency, program, institution, group or individual in the city. Ten units of credit are granted for the internship. This is the heart of the program and it derives its centrality from the diversity and quality of the available internship opportunities. The program developed an excellent reputation in the city and the staff is able to offer truly unique internship in a wide range of areas. The high reputation is due to a number of factors including the dedication and reliability of the students, the large number of hours per week students are able to work, and the close supervision and training provided by the program staff.
- 2) Urban Studies Seminar. The seminar meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays. While the approach of the course is overtly sociological, the staff tried to incorporate an interdisciplinary orientation. The course mixed traditional classroom, textbook, instruction with the use of what was called the "living laboratory" by the extensive use of community speakers, field trips, group and individual research projects. The goals of the seminar are many, but its primary purpose is to provide a forum whereby the student's urban experiences are firmly grounded in relevant concepts, theories, and research.

- 3) Tutorial/Independent Study. The optional tutorial is worth one or two units. Emphasis is placed on designing the tutorial in relationship to the student's major, areas of interest, and placement. We utilized a contract whereby students indicate their responsibilities and the faculty indicate the educational objectives and their responsibilities for the course.

Program Goals

In developing the program, the staff identified three general educational goals of the program: (1) give students a body of knowledge which is relevant to an urban world, (2) teach students how to utilize this knowledge, and (3) teach students to be self-motivated learners. In addition, we identified five major program goals:

- (1) Provide an opportunity for students to explore and test vocational interests, skills, and goals.
- (2) Provide multiple situations whereby students can apply concepts, principles, and theories learned in the classroom to the urban situation.
- (3) Help students achieve an integrated, multidisciplinary view of the structures, processes, people, and quality of the urban environment and community.
- (4) Provide students with a cross-cultural perspective and experiences (racial, economic, social, and political) through the context of the urban situation.
- (5) Give students an opportunity to participate in a living-learning community where faculty and fellow students become learning catalysts, resources, and friends.

Methodology

In depth interviews were conducted with 49 of the program participants. On the basis of these interviews a 73 item questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was completed by an additional 74 students in the program (over a one-and-a-half-year time period). Mean scores, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated. In addition, Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance, with unequal groups, was used to study the effects of the socio-demographic variables on selected variables. The purpose of the analysis is to determine if the program goals are being realized (and to what degree) and attempt to isolate factors which influence learning in the program.

Most of the questions are of the agree-disagree (accurate description-inaccurate description) type. Most of the questions have a seven point continuum format. The questionnaire is divided into four major sections: 1) initial motivation for coming to the program; 2) activity description (characteristics of student placements); 3) relationship description (student with faculty and internship supervisors); and 4) evaluation of learning opportunities. One of the major difficulties in analyzing a program such as this one, is the so-called "Hawthorne effect" (Sobal et al., 1981). Because this program is located off-campus, in an attractive urban setting, and most of the instructional methods utilized are different from those found in traditional classroom instruction, there is a great tendency for students and faculty to evaluate such a program positively irrespective of any hard empirical data (more than simple impressionistic observations and testimonial from students). Much of the success of an innovative program may be due to the fact that it is a break in the routine which forces a

higher level of commitment and imagination from the college, the staff, and the students. For this reason, we made the decision to report only those responses which were at the end of the seven-point continuum, one or two or 6 or 7.

Results

Description of Students

Table 1 gives the socio-demographic characteristics of the program participants. A typical student in the Urban Program is a female, junior or senior, with a sociology or psychology major, 2.97 grade point average, from an upper-middle class, suburban home. Comparing the Urban Program participants with the general Westmont College population, we find that they are very similar. Urban Program participants have a slightly higher grade point average, a larger majority are women, and a much higher percentage have majors in sociology (and to a lesser degree, psychology).

Table 1 about here

Student Type

Students were asked to select which of four student types best fit their own personal educational philosophy. The philosophies are adapted from Clark and Trow's (1966) description of four college subgroups. They labeled them Vocational, Academic, Collegiate, and Non-conformist. The Vocational person sees education as primarily preparation for a future occupation. The Non-conformist is primarily motivated by intellectual curiosity. The Academic person is in many respects like the non-conformist in that he is concerned with the pursuit of knowledge, but he is also concerned with the social aspects of campus life. Finally, the Collegiate person is concerned with the social aspects of college life.

Two of the educational types, the Academic and the Non-conformist, are concerned primarily with ideas; the other two, Vocational and Collegiate, seem to be less intellectually oriented. Fifty-eight percent of the students identified themselves as academic, 24% as non-conformist, 12% as vocational, and 5% as collegiate.

Motivation Measure

Table 2 shows the distribution of students' initial motivations for participating in the Urban Program. The most often cited reason for

Table 2 about here

participating in the Urban Program was that students wanted "to participate in different learning experiences" (87.8%) and it was the best overall opportunity for the semester (74.3%). Work in a field of interest (64.9%), cross-cultural experience (62.2%), and learn about the urban environment (51.3%) were all strongly agreed to by at least one-half of the students. Exploring future job opportunities was strongly agreed to by almost one-half of the students (47.3%). Only 16.2% of the students listed service to others as a reason for enrolling in the program.

Internship Description

We divided internships into four types: cross-cultural, organization, direct-service, and research. The components are not independent but rather identify the primary component of a student's placement or internships. The data indicate that most of the internships are per-

Table 3 about here

ceived as having a strong cross-cultural (79.7%) or direct-service (74.3%) component. The strong cross-cultural component is consistent with their cross-cultural motivation for enrolling in the program. But the high direct-service component does not appear consistent with the low "service to others" motivation for enrolling in the program. Either students' motivations changed after they enrolled in the program or they may be in direct service internships for other than altruistic motivations, such as the educational value of such internships.

Program Components

It would appear that the Urban Program is evaluated as a very positive experience by most of the students (87.8% said they would like to try such a program like this again). In terms of the two main divisions of the program, 64.9% felt that the placement experience met all of their objectives, while 47.3% felt that the Urban Studies Seminar met all of their objectives.

Program Goals

Table 4 indicates students' evaluations of the five program goals: test vocational interest and skills, apply academic concepts to the urban environment, multidisciplinary urban perspective, cross-cultural experience, and participation in living-learning community.

Table 4 about here

Vocational Skills

As Table 4 indicates, about 50% of the students strongly agreed that they learned about future jobs. This finding is consistent with the relatively low rating of vocational interests in original motivations for enrolling in the program.

Applied Learning

The Urban Studies Seminar is the major component of the program that provides opportunities for applied learning. About 55% of the students agreed that "applying textbook knowledge to real-life situations was an important part of the Urban Studies Seminar" (see Table 5).

Table 5 about here

About 53% of the students indicated they "know better how to get something done in a public agency or community"; 61% of the students said they are "more interested in working with public issues and community problems"; 69% of the students said they are "more interested in community-based learning"; and 73% of the students mentioned working with others in community as a positive aspect (see Table 4).

Multidisciplinary View of Urban Situation

"Commitment to interdisciplinary, problem-solving, learning" received a relatively low (52.96%) strongly agree evaluation (86.5% did respond either 1, 2, or 3 in the seven point scale). The interdisciplinary, problem-solving, aspect of the program is realized most directly through the Urban Studies Seminar. But approximately 70% of the students strongly agreed that they "believe urban problem are more serious and urgent."

Cross-Cultural Experience

In terms of the fourth program goal approximately 57% of the students felt that they "increased ability to work with others quite different from myself," while 81% "learned to appreciate more those people of different races and economic backgrounds." But at the same

time, only 39% strongly agreed that they "increased my ability to work with people." These findings may relate to the strong cross-cultural component in many of the internships. The program appears to be providing students with many new experiences and exposing them to different kinds of people but did not necessarily increase their ability to work with different people.

Living-Learning Community

We found that students felt that participating with others in a living-learning community was an important aspect of the program for them (73% strongly agree). We also found that students appreciated the opportunity to develop relationships with the faculty within and outside the classroom (77% strongly agree).

Many people have expressed the opinion that student-centered methods of learning, in which students are an integral part of the planning and development of their educational program and are encouraged to become active, self-motivated, learners, tend to produce greater gains in insight and problem-solving capacities. Our data on the Urban Program students indicate that students feel that they should be more involved in developing their educational program (77%) and they became more self-motivated learners as a result of their involvement in the program (66.86%). Our data appear to indicate that a sense of community with students and faculty has been realized and that this is very influential in the types of learning which can take place.

Factors that Influence Student Learning

Using the Kruskal-Wallis method of analysis of variance, we analyzed factors which influenced certain types of student learning in the

Westmont Urban Program. The minimum level of significance is .05 ($p=.05$). The data indicate that females tended to have more cross-cultural ($H=8.18$, $p>.01$) and direct service ($H=4.58$, $p>.05$). This compares with Kiel's (1972:26) findings which showed that women in his study of internship programs in the South tended to have more cross-cultural experiences than males.

Females tended to, more than males, feel that the Urban Studies Seminar was a positive experience ($H=5.93$, $p>.05$), and they tended to feel that working with people in group projects was a significant aspect of the program for them ($H=4.02$, $p>.05$). In relationship to the learning variables, females tended to see themselves as more self-motivated learners ($H=6.13$, $p>.05$); were more interested in working with public issues and community problems ($H=6.00$, $p>.05$); were more interested in community-based learning ($H=4.82$, $p>.05$); and as having learned to appreciate the differences and similarities of those of different races and economic backgrounds ($H=4.06$, $p>.05$) than males.

Males, more than females, tended to see urban problems as less urgent and pressing ($H=7.30$, $p>.01$). Males also, more than females, felt that they increased their ability to work with people different from themselves ($H=7.42$, $p>.01$).

In relationship to year in school, sophomores had more cross-cultural ($H=6.04$, $p>.05$) and research ($H=6.41$, $p>.05$) components in their placements. Seniors tended to feel that the Urban Studies Seminar provided them with the opportunity to apply textbook knowledge to real-life situations more than did the sophomores or juniors ($H=6.72$, $p>.05$). Sophomores tended to feel that they were more self-motivated as learners than did either the juniors or the seniors ($H=6.90$, $p>.05$). Sophomores

more than the other classes tended to feel that urban problems are more serious and urgent than they realized before they had participated in the program ($H=7.23$, $p>.05$).

Students with the lowest grade-point averages (2.0-2.5) tended to score significantly higher in the area of learning to appreciate the differences and similarities between themselves and people of different racial and economic backgrounds than did students with higher grade-point averages ($H=9.02$, $p>.05$).

Students who came from larger cities (100,000 plus) tended to indicate that they developed an ability to work with people who were different from themselves ($H=5.41$, $p>.05$) more than did students from smaller cities and towns. Students who identified the place where they grew up as a suburb had a significant tendency to see outside speakers as a positive aspect of their learning during the semester ($H=8.14$, $p>.05$).

In relationship to student types, academically oriented students tended to identify their original reason for coming to the program as an opportunity to be involved with people and ideas different from themselves ($H=8.57$, $p>.05$), and they, more than others, wanted to get off campus and participate in different learning experiences ($H=16.72$, $p>.001$). This is consistent with the ideologies engendered in the academic philosophy.

Discussion

It has been stated by many educational philosophers that the best education is rooted in experience. But this should not be interpreted that all experiences are genuinely educative. Whether a set of experiences is truly educative and worthy of inclusion in the academic

curriculum depends upon the quality of the experiences. De Martini (1979:343) describes the value of placing students in applied settings. It "... opens access to knowledge and experience within an area of practical concern and provides the opportunity to apply conceptual frameworks to these areas so as to better understand the sources of problems and possible solutions."

There appears to be two components to De Martini's description, access to knowledge and experience and applying conceptual frameworks to social problems. In terms of the first component, the Urban Program was generally evaluated by the students as being a success. They especially valued their cross-cultural experiences, participating in a living-learning environment, and learning about the urban environment. In terms of the second component, the Urban Program is less successful.

The program appears to be successful in teaching students about the urban community and the issues and problems it faces, but the program appears to be less successful in helping students apply sociological concepts and theories to the urban situation. Satarino and Rogers (1979) noted, in a survey of undergraduate internship programs, that lack of academic content was the major obstacle to a successful internship program. Commentators have suggested a number of ways to increase the academic content of internship programs including an on-going weekly seminar with field placement students (De Martini, 1979) and the use of student journals (Cook, 1977; Wagenaar, 1977). Both of these components were utilized in the program, yet the student evaluations and staff observations indicated that the student's internship experiences needed more theoretical grounding.

After analyzing the evaluation, the program staff felt that a missing component in the program was that students needed to be more deliberately guided through the problem discovering and solving process with particular emphasis on research methodology. The key to bridging the gap between sociological concepts, theory, and experience is having students actively involved in the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The student is thereby transformed from merely an observer to an active participant in the learning process.

Our evaluation also indicated, that to work successfully, applied programs cannot simply be added to the traditional curriculum. Integration is the key. This is especially true of off-campus programs. As Mauksch (1983:2) notes: "applied sociology must be identified by faculty and experienced by students as an integral and important part of the total sociological enterprise." Efforts should be directed at the creation of activities where students can directly utilize their applied skills at the home campus both within and outside of the formal curriculum. Faculty at the home campus need to be made aware of the types of activities and learning situations students are involved in during the internship program.

The challenge for sociology as a discipline is not to respond to the current trend of declining enrollments by being merely new or innovative, but to use this time as an opportunity to re-examine itself as a discipline as well as re-examining its curriculum. Mauksch (1981:3) notes that curriculum revisions must not be motivated simply by ". . . the search for a formula which will attract students, increase enrollments, and enable the sociology catalogue to compete with other offerings for the 1980s."

While most of the current interest in the use of applied programs is on increasing enrollments and the vocational training and employability of sociology majors, our evaluation indicates that internship based programs are also consistent with a traditional liberal arts education. When students in the Westmont Urban Program emphasize the educational and experiential (as compared to vocational) aspects of the internship program, it is consistent with the general orientation of their education. Bradshaw and McPherron (1978), in a survey of sociology departments, found that many of the respondents felt strongly that sociology and a sociological perspective is central to the liberal arts.

T. M. Greene (1955) wrote 30 years ago that liberal arts education and vocational training should not be viewed as mutually exclusive educational philosophies. If they are divorced, ". . . a merely liberal education will indeed be useless, and a merely vocational training, crass" (p. 118). Undergraduate applied programs should not focus solely on job skills (neither can they ignore students' vocational needs). As our study indicates, there is a place for both types of programs within the discipline of sociology. Indeed, the most fruitful long-term strategy is the integration of both orientations within a single program.

Footnotes

- ¹In the early 1970s such important commissions as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education Report, Less Time, More Options (1971); the American Academy of Arts and Science Report, the Assembly on Goals and Governance (1971); and the Newman Report on Higher Education (1971) recommended that colleges and universities should introduce more off-campus work as an integral feature of the curricula.
- ²But one should not come to the conclusion that internship education is a relatively new concept. The first cooperative or internship based education program was started at the University of Cincinnati by Herman Schneider for the University's School of Engineering (Hermann, 1973). In 1921, Antioch College was the first to see internships as valuable in the general liberal arts curriculum (Knowles, 1971).
- ³Besides students from Westmont College, students came from other colleges, especially Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

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TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics of Westmont Urban Program Students

		Number	Percentages
Sex	Male	26	35
	Female	48	65
Race	Black	1	1
	White	73	99
Major	Sociology	37	50
	Psychology	16	21.6
	English Lit.	5	6.8
	Pol. Science	4	5.4
	Soc. Science	4	5.4
	Bus./Economics	3	4
	Other	5	6.8
Year in School	Sophomore	8	10.8
	Junior	25	33.8
	Senior	40	54.1
	Fifth Year	1	1.3
GPA	2.00-2.25	3	4.0
	2.26-2.50	11	14.9
	2.51-2.75	9	12.2
	2.76-3.00	23	31.1
	3.01-3.25	10	13.5
	3.26-3.50	14	18.9
	3.51-3.75	4	5.4
Social Class (Father's Education)	Professional	24	32.4
	4 yrs. college	25	33.8
	1-3 yrs. college	10	13.8
	4 yrs. high school	11	14.9
	10-11 yrs. school	2	2.7
	7-9 yrs. school	2	2.7
	Under 7 yrs. school	0	0
Population Size	999 or less	0	0
	1,000 to 2,499	3	4.1
	2,500 to 9,999	15	20.3
	10,000 to 99,999	36	48.6
	100,000 to 999,999	17	23
	1 million or more	3	4
Community	Village	3	4.1
	Town	15	20.3
	City	18	24.3
	Suburb	33	44.6
	Metropolitan Area	5	6.7
N=74 Total Number		74	100.0

TABLE 2

Motivational Variables: Reasons Why Students Participated
in the Urban Program

<u>Questionnaire Item</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Percent Strongly Agree*</u>
I wanted to get off campus and participate in different learning experiences.	1.56757	1.30417	87.8
It was the best overall opportunity for the semester.	2.04054	1.47527	74.3
I wanted to work in a field that was of particular interest to me.	2.44595	1.65639	64.9
I wanted an opportunity to be involved with and exposed to people and ideas different from myself.	2.4324	1.31181	62.2
I wanted to learn about the city and the urban environment.	2.72973	1.52870	51.3
I was concerned about exploring future job opportunities.	3.17568	1.85323	47.3
I was looking for a chance to be of service to others.	4.43243	1.72875	16.2

The item titles are summaries of the positive ends of the seven-point continuum. In this table, 1.00 indicates maximum agreement and 7.00 equals maximum disagreement.

*Strong agreement means that the respondents replied one or two on a seven-point agree-disagree scale.

TABLE 3

Major Component of Student's Internship Placement

<u>Internship Description</u>	<u>Percent Strongly Agree*</u>
Cross-cultural	79.7
Direct Service	74.3
Organizational	13.5
Research	12.1

*Strong agreement means that the respondents replied one or two on the seven-point agree-disagree scale.

TABLE 4

Perceived Learning as a Result of Student Participation
in the Westmont Urban Program

<u>Questionnaire Item</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Percent Strongly Agree*</u>
Appreciate differences and similarities of those of different races and economic backgrounds more.	1.86	.98	81.07
Students should be more involved in developing their educational programs.	1.86	1.14	77.02
Work with others in community was a positive aspect.	2.12	1.40	72.96
Believe urban problems are more serious and urgent.	2.07	1.14	70.26
More interested in community-based learning.	2.28	1.40	68.91
Self-motivated learner.	2.24	1.21	64.86
Increased self-confidence.	2.40	1.33	60.80
More interested in working with public issues and community problems.	2.43	1.35	60.80
Increased ability to work with others quite different from myself.	2.77	1.69	56.75
Committed to interdisciplinary problem-solving learning.	2.35	1.01	52.96
Know better how to get something done in a public agency or community.	2.86	1.64	52.96
Learned a lot about future jobs.	2.61	1.52	49.99
Worked this year follow-up on semester issues and concerns.	3.08	1.64	40.53
Increased my ability to work with people.	2.91	1.27	39.17

*Strongly agree means that the respondents replied one or two on a seven-point agree-disagree scale.

TABLE 5Factors of the Urban Studies Seminar
Which Influence the Learning Opportunities

<u>Questionnaire Item</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Percent Strongly Agree*</u>
Use of outside speakers was a positive aspect of the program.	2.77	1.50	45.9
Appreciated opportunity to work with people in group projects and activities.	2.68	1.87	56.8
Applying textbook knowledge to real-life situations was an important part of the Urban Studies Seminar.	2.74	1.62	55.4
The Urban Studies Seminar was a positive factor in my learning during the semester.	2.55	1.70	56.8

*Strong agreement means that the respondents replied one or two on a seven-point agree-disagree scale.